

## **Religious Freedom Amendment Receives Historic Approval by U.S. House Judiciary Committee**

*Washington, D.C.* - It has been nearly 28 years since the U.S. House of Representatives last voted on a proposed constitutional amendment for voluntary school prayer and to protect religious freedom. Today, however, the House Judiciary Committee voted to approve just such an amendment, setting the stage for a full House floor vote in the next couple of months.

The Committee approved the Religious Freedom Amendment, House Joint Resolution 78, on a vote of \_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_, the first time a House committee has ever approved a school prayer amendment. (Congressman), a co-sponsor of the proposed amendment, called it a crucial step forward.

**“This is a key step forward to restore the full protection for our American values and beliefs,”** (Congressman) said. **“We wish it did not require a constitutional amendment, however too many judges on our nation’s courts have distorted or ignored our First Amendment religious liberties.”**

(Congressman) noted, **“It is wrong to say that our children cannot start the day with simple prayers if they wish. Even a moment of silence has been called ‘unconstitutional!’ We will keep working to restore what our Founding Fathers intended to protect when they wrote the Constitution.”**

The text of the amendment is as follows:

**To secure the people’s right to acknowledge God according to the dictates of conscience: Neither the United States nor any State shall establish any official religion, but the people’s right to pray and to recognize their religious beliefs, heritage, or traditions on public property, including schools, shall not be infringed. Neither the United States nor any state shall require any person to join in prayer or other religious activity, prescribe school prayers, discriminate against religion, or deny equal access to a benefit on account of religion.**

Prior to the Committee vote, House Speaker Newt Gingrich (R-GA) had praised the work on the Religious Freedom Amendment, **“The House has taken a vital step to restore religious freedom for every American who is endowed by their Creator, with the right to pursue happiness. With the support of the American people, we will continue to work to ensure that our most fundamental constitutional rights of free speech and religious expression are not diminished in public places – this is the essence of freedom.”**

The Religious Freedom Amendment has bipartisan support. It was introduced on May 8 by Reps. Ernest Istook, (R-OK), Sanford Bishop, (D-GA) and several others. There are currently 151 cosponsors. The coalition supporting the Religious Freedom Amendment includes Christian, Jewish and Muslim groups.

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